

Message Text

SECRET

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16

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 CAB-02 COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-04 FAA-00

SAM-01 /067 W

----- 019203

R 070845Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2210

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T ABU DHABI 1523

BEIRUT FOR DWOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CIVAIR, TC, SY, US

SUBJ: SYRIAN AIRLINE PURCHASE

1. I HAD OCCASION DURING CALL ON ABU DHABI CROWN PRINCE SHAIKH KHALIFA, NOVEMBER 5, TO MENTION OUR INTEREST IN SALE OF US AIRCRAFT FOR SYRIAN AIRLINES. AS WITH OTHERS HERE, I STRESSED PROVEN CAPABILITY

OF US AIRCRAFT EQUIPMENT IN THIS FIELD AND SAID I WAS CONVINCED UAEG WOULD WANT SEE SYRIANS GET BEST POSSIBLE AIRCRAFT. I ALSO RELATED SALE OF US AIRCRAFT TO OUR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES IN SYRIA, SAYING CIVIL

AVIATION WAS OBVIOUSLY KEY SECTOR AND WE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO HAVE STRONG US PRESENCE IN THIS KEY FIELD.

2. KHALIFA SAID THAT FRENCH AND GERMAN AMBASSADORS HAD RECENTLY BEEN TO SEE HIM TO STRESS THEIR INTEREST IN SEEING

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AIR BUS SOLD AND HE HAD REPLIED TO THEM, AS HE WOULD TO ME

ON THIS OCCASION, THAT WHILE ABU DHABI HAD OFFERED TO FINANCE THIS PURCHASE, DECISION AS TO WHICH AIRCRAFT TO BUY WAS ENTIRELY UP TO SYRIANS. HE SAID ABU DHABI WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THIS DECISION.

3. COMMENT: THIS WAS REPLY I EXPECTED FROM KHALIFA, BUT I NEVERTHELESS CONSIDERED IT USEFUL TO WEIGH IN WITH HIM AT THIS TIME, NOT HAVING HAD THE CHANCE TO RAISE SUBJECT WITH HIM PREVIOUSLY, AND PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF RELIABLE INFORMATION WE HAD INDEPENDENTLY ACQUIRED THAT GERMANS AND FRENCH WERE MAKING APPROACHES TO HIM ON BEHALF OF AIRBUS. (FRENCH SEE KHALIFA AS FAVORABLE POINT OF LEVERAGE IN LIGHT OF HIS POSITION AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF ADDF, AND MAJOR ROLE FRENCH ARE PLAYING IN SUPPLYING MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO ADDF.) WORD HAS UNDOUBTEDLY GONE BACK TO SARG VIA FRENCH AND SYRIANS BY NOW INDICATING THAT MONEY WILL BE AVAILABLE REGARDLESS OF WHICH AIRCRAFT (OF WESTERN MAKE) SYRIANS EVENTUALLY DECIDE ON. HOWEVER, IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT MAHDI TAJIR, WHO IS APPARENTLY LOBBYING HARD FOR SYRIA'S PURCHASE OF AMERICAN AIRCRAFT, TRAVELLED WITH SHAIKH ZAYID TO DAMASCUS. IN THESE SITUATIONS THE MAN ON THE SPOT HAS THE ADVANTAGES, AND PARTICULARLY SINCE TAJIR HAS HIS FINGERS IN MANY DIFFERENT ABU DHABI PROJECTS IN SYRIA, WE DO NOT AS YET COUNT HIS EFFORTS OUT.
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